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Third Meeting, December 13th, 1858.

SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON, PRESIDENT, in the Chair.

PRESENTATIONS.—*Earl Stanhope, the Rev. N. Lewis, and Messrs. J. A. Rucker, G. M. M. Esmeade, and Conway M. Shipley, were presented upon their election.*

ELECTIONS.—*Colonel J. A. Hazellius, Chief of the Topographical Corps of Sweden, as a Corresponding Member; Capt. C. Cornuallies Chesney, R.E.; Captain E. Monckton Jones; Rev. William J. Edge, M.A.; James Allan; Henry Blackett; Henry Collinson; William Davies; Pascoe St. Leger Grenfell; Charles Lewell, Phil. Dr.; Francis Lyne; A. Henderson MacDougall; J. Sydney Stopford; and J. J. W. Watson, Esqrs., were elected Fellows.*

The Papers read were:—

1. *Notes on the River Amúr and the adjacent Districts.* By MM. PESCHUROF, VASILIEF, RADDE, USOLTZOF, PARGACHEFSKI, &c.

THE Paper read before the Society consists of a large collection of extracts from a series of reports made to the Imperial Geographical Society of Russia. They were written by the leaders of the various expeditions which had been despatched to explore the Valley of the Amúr, its tributaries, and adjacent districts.

It will be recollected that the Amúr is the most valuable river of Northern Asia, and the only one that connects its central steppes with the rest of the world. It is navigable, with trifling interruptions, from the Pacific, by the Sea of Okotsk, to the very foot of the Yablonnoi range, and it appears that a very small amount of road and canal would suffice to open a communication between that point and the Baltic by way of the Selenga River and Lake Baikal. A certain amount of commerce is already being carried on upon the waters of the Amúr. American products and manufactures find their way to Irkutsk, and salted meat from the trans-Baikal provinces is exported in exchange. Russian immigrants are beginning to settle along its banks among the ten tribes (some partly settled, others entirely nomad) that have hitherto occupied the soil. Taking, as a whole, the accounts of the various travellers whose communications have been incorporated into the present paper, it would appear that the Amúr is within—but only just within—a climate admitting of agricultural fertility and pastoral wealth. The summer is fine, but winter is extremely rigorous, and the natural vegetation of the land consists alone of the hardiest plants. Farther

to the north the climate becomes rapidly more unendurable; but, on the other hand, a genial climate and a new flora are soon reached on travelling to the southward.*

CAPTAIN R. COLLINSON, F.R.G.S.—I have not visited the country watered by the Amúr, and therefore I approach the subject with some degree of trepidation, for I always like to see a thing before I speak about it. But as you have called me up, I must say that I have perused with a great deal of pleasure the papers which have been intrusted to me by the Council for publication in the Transactions of the Society, and I cannot help expressing my admiration of the able manner in which this exploration of a hitherto unknown country has been carried out. We may feel some national jealousy at the acquisition of so large a territory by a power which is already so predominant in Europe and Asia, but as geographers, in our special capacity, we must rejoice that this territory is now open to civilised occupation. From what I have read, and from what I have seen, it offers an admirable position for those who wish to colonise: it has everything that is required for the making of a great country. I also may say that although a stern winter visits it, yet it has undoubted capabilities for the production of corn, the great staple of our maintenance, and the vine which rejoices us; so that I think the country will prove a most valuable acquisition to the world in general. And although it has not fallen to our province to administer the functions of government in it, yet I cannot but think that this highway being opened into Central Asia will afford a great opening to British commerce.

THE PRESIDENT.—This subject is so peculiarly interesting to Russia as well as to ourselves, that my distinguished friend his Excellency Baron Brunnow would have been here had he not been prevented by illness. That circumstance alone may be taken as the expression of a wish on the part of Russia to co-operate with the interests of British commerce. Without inflicting on you, gentlemen, any more observations of my own, I will refer those of you who wish to know more of my sentiments on the Amúr question, to the 2nd volume, page 277, of our Proceedings, where, in my last "Annual Address," I endeavoured to bring to your notice the great importance of this noble river.

The second Paper read was:—

2. *Explorations in Ecuador in 1856-7.* By MR. G. J. PRITCHETT.

Communicated by W. BOLLAERT, Esq., F.R.G.S.

THE interest lately excited towards Ecuador by the adjudication of $4\frac{1}{2}$ millions of acres of its land to satisfy the claims of foreign creditors makes any information about this country the more acceptable.

The limits of the republic were not accurately defined at the time of the separation of Old Columbia into the three republics of Ecuador, New Granada, and Venezuela; and, again, the frontier on the side of Brazil and Peru is at the present moment under dispute.

* See also Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, vol. ii. p. 153.—ED.